Witness Name: Neil James Robertson
Statement No: WITN1493001
Exhibits: 0
Dated: March 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF NEIL JAMES ROBERTSON

I, Neil James Robertson will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Neil James Robertson and I was born on the GRO-C 1974. I live at GRO-C Glasgow, GRO-C I am single and currently not working.

2. As a result of receiving contaminated blood products I was infected with Non A Non B Hepatitis(later known as Hep C). I have cleared the Hep C naturally, however by that point I had passed the chronic stages.

3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I was diagnosed with Haemophilia B when I was a year old. There is no history of Haemophilia in my family; however my mother was diagnosed as being a carrier.

5. In order to treat my Haemophilia I received non-heated Factor IX (FIX) blood products. My treatment started as soon as I was diagnosed in 1975. I do not know the manufacturers or the batch numbers of any of the products I received.

6. My Haemophilia care was initially under Dr Ludlum at Falkirk and Edinburgh Royal Infirmary between the years 1975 to 1986. From 1986 to 1994 I was treated at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and was under the care of Dr GRO-D I am currently registered and treated at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

7. I used to attend the hospital for treatment. I started home treatment in the early 1980s. My mother was the one who home treated me. I only required FIX treatment as and when I had a bleed.

8. At the time my mother was my main medical carer. She was not provided with any information beforehand about the risk of infection when using blood products.

9. As stated above, I was infected with Hep C. However I do not know when I was infected or when I first tested positive. On the 8 February 1994 I was told that I was infected with Hep C. I was applying for a job as cabin crew and I needed medical notes to cover my Haemophilia. It was at this time my mother and I were called into a meeting with my haematologist and told of the infections.

10. The meeting was prompted by my mother who requested to see Dr GRO-D GRO-D my haematologist at the time, as she was concerned about the HIV and Hepatitis status. It was at this meeting that we found out I was HIV negative, but that I had been infected with Hepatitis C.

11. We were not told much about the infections. I didn't really understand them at the time and I got quite upset. I was asked to leave the room and I believe some information was given to my mother. I felt at the time the meeting was rushed and Dr GRO-D was working with patients with leukaemia so she was

in a rush to get the meeting over with. All I was told was that I had been infected. It was all very blunt. We weren't given much information and offered no counselling. My mother was also very upset about it.

12. We were not provided with adequate information and I feel that the information should have been provided much earlier. They must have known I was infected earlier. I believe that had I not applied for the position as cabin crew I wouldn't have been told about the infections.

13. The way the information was communicated to me was very poor. It was all so direct and blunt. They just said I had hepatitis, and I was totally confused about it all. I didn't know what it was or how it would affect me.

14. I was not given any information about the risks of passing the infection onto others. A few years after finding out I was infected I was able to find out more information through my own research. I was told that I had cleared it naturally and that I had the antibodies to it. I just didn't really understand it at all. No one explained it to me. I thought it was a death sentence at the time.

15. My mother was heavily involved with the Haemophilia Society but there just wasn't much information available at the time.

Section 3. Other Infections

16. I do not believe that I was infected with anything else other than Hep C. I was scared at the time because a few years prior there was a big scare in relation to HIV and I thought I had it. I was so scared at the time that I stopped taking my Haemophilia treatment because of it all as I thought I would be infected with other infections. I ended up being taken to hospital and being force treated.

Section 4. Consent

17. At no point throughout my Haemophilia treatment was I told that I was to be tested for such infections, therefore, these tests were carried out without mine or my mother's knowledge.

18. I believe I was tested without my consent and without being given adequate or full information.

19. I am unsure if I was tested or treated for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

20. At the time, I became very depressed and low. I didn't really understand what it meant. I thought I was going to die.

21. I became ignorant to it and, as stated above, I stopped taking my Haemophilia treatment because I thought it would make me worse. I remember being pinned down and forced to have FIX treatment. This started when I was about 9 years old at Falkirk Hospital and at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. This continued for years, even after I transferred up to Aberdeen when we moved. They had to pin me down because I was refusing to even do home treatment. Sometimes my anxiety wasn't so bad and I wouldn't need to be pinned down, but other times I couldn't bring myself to be treated. This had a huge psychological impact on me.

22. Obviously the Inquiry is a good thing but it is bringing a lot of bad things up for me.

23. I just felt tired all the time and I believe it was because of the infection. I remember there was a time when I had a really bad itch which wouldn't go away and I ended up having to be hospitalised. That was when I was most poorly and it was as a result of my liver.

24. It was definitely more of a psychological impact than a physical impact for me.

25. I did not receive any treatment for the Hep C. I was told I had chronic Hep C but that my body had cleared it. I had the antibodies to Hep C. I was told this further along the line, when I started looking for further information about it.

26. They do still check my liver and my blood for Haemophilia. My liver function tests are okay for now.

27. I became a hermit when I found out that I had Hep C. I thought I was going to pass it on and even to this day I haven't been able to have a long term relationship because of the infection. My ex-partner didn't seem to understand the infection and Haemophilia. He was worried I would pass it on to him and it put a huge strain on our relationship. The infection made me feel dirty and I still feel I can't get involved in a relationship because of it.

28. I just feel like there is no point in trying to get into a relationship because it will put people off. I don't want to lie to people about what's happened or not tell them about my Haemophilia. I know in myself I can't pass the infection on, but it's difficult to explain this to others.

29. The stigma had a massive impact on me. I felt I couldn't tell anyone what happened at the time. I was in a really low way. I isolated myself from my friends and because I didn't understand it I thought I would pass it on. I just felt dirty.

30. I missed out on a lot of my education but that was mainly due to me stopping taking the FIX treatment. I thought I was going to make the infection worse. I wanted to become a member of a cabin crew but I wasn't able to carry it on because I was so fatigued. It was my dream job and what I wanted to do but I couldn't carry on because I as so fatigued.

31. I was unable to carry on working as cabin crew and my employers gave me a job as ground crew. However, I was unable to carry this on because of my tiredness. As a result this has had a huge financial impact on me.

32. We were my mother's world. I know that she was down about it all and she hid things from me. I certainty understand know how she felt at that time. My brother and sister used to tease me about stuff, but we were younger at the time. It made me feel worse but we were only kids.

33. I am quite open with my brother and sister now about what happened. My mother passed away a couple of years ago and we are very open with each other. We all support each other.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

34. I started to receive counselling just over a year ago. My haematologist offered it to me and I am still seeing a counsellor. It is through the Haemophilia branch. I do not believe it is adequate or working for me. They help me understand things but they don't help with a lot of other things.

35. I was diagnosed with depression over 10 years ago as a result of what has happened. I have tried medication but I don't feel it works for me. This is why I am now trying counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

36. I have received money from the Skipton Fund. I believe it was around 15 years ago that I received a Stage 1 payment in the sum of £20,000.

37. I received a £30,000 top up from the SIBSS and I now receive £18,500 per annum spread out across monthly payments. Initially I was receiving less than this but my Consultant got involved and said that I would be eligible for more.

38. I found the process of applying for the funds quite straight forward. I just had to fill in my parts and the consultant filled in theirs.

39. I did not have any difficulties in applying for the financial assistance and I do not believe that there were any preconditions imposed when making the application.

40. I think its great what the Scottish Government are doing I've not had any problems with them but I think that other parts of the UK are not getting as much.

Section 8. Other Issues

41. I want answers to what has happened. I want justice.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

42. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

43. I do not wish to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed. GRO-C

Dated 30.06.2020